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# Key messages of the second session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

## Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat hereby transmits the input from the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development to the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

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# Key messages of the second session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

[Original: Arabic, English and French]

## I. Introduction

1. The Economic Commission for Africa, together with the Government of Egypt, the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank, and in collaboration with the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund, convened the second session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in Cairo from 17 to 19 May 2016, in preparation for the 2016 session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, to be held in New York from 11 to 20 July 2016.

2. The second session of the Forum was attended by more than 200 participants, comprising high-level representatives of Governments, major groups and other stakeholders,[1] United Nations bodies and other international organizations.

3. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following member States: Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, the Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, the Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Swaziland, Tunisia, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

4. The Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development was established in 2015 by resolution 930 (XLVIII) of the eighth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. The Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development held its inaugural meeting in June 2015 in preparation for the 2015 session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

5. At the ninth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, which took place in April 2016, a resolution was adopted reaffirming the mandate of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. The resolution called upon the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with the African Union Commission and other partners, to convene the Forum annually to follow-up and review the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The resolution stressed the need for the Forum to integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development (social, economic and environmental), build on existing platforms to avoid the creation of additional administrative structures, and promote coordination and

[1] The term "major groups" refers to the following sectors: groups and associations of women; children and young people; indigenous peoples; non-governmental organizations; local authorities; workers and trade unions; business and industry; scientific and technological community; and farmers.

coherence within the United Nations development system and other regional and subregional forums. The resolution also called for reviews of the implementation of all regional outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits to be sequenced and synchronized with the work of the Forum to ensure that such reviews contribute to the assessment of the integrated regional implementation, follow-up and review of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda.

6. The second session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development was convened against the backdrop of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and at a time when African countries are transitioning to Agenda 2063 from the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) programme. African countries have committed themselves to implementing both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. Africa has, therefore, the unique and dual obligation to implement and follow-up both agendas, which are intricately linked and have many synergies. Africa can best achieve the goals and aspirations of the two agendas by ensuring integrated implementation, follow-up and review.

7. The second session of the Forum was also convened in the context of the adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the outcome document of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda is a global framework for financing sustainable development, which reaffirms and builds on the 2002 Monterrey Consensus and the 2008 Doha Declaration. The Agenda includes concrete commitments that are directly relevant to the financing of not only the 2030 Agenda but also Agenda 2063.

8. In addition, the second session of the Forum was held shortly after the ninth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, the theme of which was" Towards an integrated and coherent approach for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals". The Joint Annual Meetings reinforced the mandate of the Forum and aligned its periodicity with that of the High-level Political Forum.

9. Against this backdrop, the second session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development was held under the theme "Ensuring inclusive and integrated implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063". The theme was well-aligned with that of the 2016 session of the High-level Political Forum," Ensuring that no one is left behind".

10. During the deliberations of the second session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, it was agreed that inclusion should be the lens that overarched integrated approaches to the implementation, follow-up and review of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The sub-themes guiding the deliberations were the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals; inclusive transformation for sustainable development through Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda; an integrated results framework and integrated implementation, including means of implementation, for both agendas; integrated follow-up and review of both agendas; and the demographic dividend road map for 2017. The deliberations of the Forum were also informed by the outcomes of the pre-meeting of the major groups and other stakeholders.

# II. Chair's summary of the key messages

11. The Chair's summary of the key messages agreed upon at the second session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, which will be submitted as an input to the 2016 session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, is set out below.

## A. Transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals

### 1. Background

12. Africa's remarkable growth over the past 15 years, ranging between four and five per cent on average, has largely been on the back of resource-commodity booms. While this has generated significant fiscal revenues for most countries, it has not created many jobs owing to the capital-intensive and enclave nature of such activities, and consequently large segments of the population have been excluded from the growth process. Poverty, unemployment and underemployment remain high and inequality is also increasing in a number of countries. Based on 2012 data, 389 million Africans are poor; 12 per cent of the population is unemployed, with youth unemployment even higher, at 21 per cent; 80 per cent of jobs are vulnerable; and income inequality, as measured by the Gini coefficient, is high at 0.43, second only to Latin America.

13. The finalization of indicators and baselines for the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 is essential for a comprehensive assessment of progress made in the implementation of the two agendas. A report on the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals has been produced for the year 2016, replacing the regional Millennium Development Goals report. The 2016 transition report tracks progress made on the Goals, targets and indicators of the Millennium Development Goals; explains the factors behind successes or setbacks; sets out the strategies undertaken by some countries to achieve the Goals; and identifies best performers and lessons learned. The report also provides background information on the adoption of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; elaborates on the importance for the continent of aligning the two agendas; highlights the challenges associated with the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the new agendas; and provides information on African countries that have started the transition.

14. It is important for Africa to make a seamless transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals at all levels. In addition, the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals must be addressed. In this regard, it is important to reduce the gaps left by the non-achievement of Goal 8 of the Millennium Development Goals, "Develop a global partnership for development". Around 1.3 billion people globally continue to live in extreme poverty and the human development needs of many more have not been met. The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals has been uneven across geographical regions and very often it is the poorest, most marginalized and most discriminated against groups, such as women, young people, persons with disabilities and ethnic minorities, who have seen the least progress. The evolving global economic situation and the negative effects of climate change have also

severely hampered the achievement of all of the Millennium Development Goal targets.

15. Regarding the roll-out of the two agendas, the transition report indicates that countries are at different stages of the process of integrating the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 into their national development planning frameworks. Those whose planning cycles coincided with the start of the Sustainable Development Goals are at a more advanced stage of integration. Their experience could be helpful to those countries that are less advanced in the process.

### 2. Key messages

16. The Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development presents the following key messages on the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals:

(a) **The High-level Political Forum should ensure the revitalization of the global, regional and national partnerships — including South-South and tripartite cooperation, as well as involvement of the private sector, civil society organizations and other non-State actors — to accelerate sustainable development in Africa.** Specific efforts should be made to curb illicit financial flows and promote technology transfer and the data revolution.

(b) **The High-level Political Forum should ensure that development partners meet their official development assistance commitments to African countries, especially least developed countries, and align them to national priorities.** According to the 2016 transition report, official development assistance to Africa shows a downward trend, with most donor countries not fulfilling their commitments to provide 0.7 per cent of gross national income in official development assistance to developing countries. Particularly worrisome is the fact that the share of total official development assistance received by African least developed countries is declining.

(c) **The High-level Political Forum should encourage the sharing and dissemination of experiences and lessons learned in the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063.** The adoption of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda by African countries is an opportunity to complete the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals. A successful transition, however, requires integrated and coordinated institutional arrangements for implementation, strengthened capacities for data collection and analysis, and a monitoring and evaluation system that is horizontally (sectorally) and vertically (nationally) integrated. The institutional frameworks currently in place in countries that have embarked on the integration processes could serve as a foundation for learning and experience sharing.

## B. Inclusive transformation and sustainable development

### 1. Background

17. The importance of an inclusive development agenda for shared global prosperity and well-being was clearly articulated in world leaders' pledge to ensure that no one is left behind in the 2030 Agenda. World leaders further committed to prioritizing the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable. Inclusion is also at the

core of Africa's growth and transformation vision, as encapsulated in Agenda 2063, which affirms the region's aspiration for a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development.

18. Ensuring inclusion in the context of sustainable development requires tackling the multidimensional drivers of exclusion related to access to opportunities, decision-making processes and human development outcomes, especially at community level. Taking these elements into account, both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 contain commitments intended to ensure inclusion through access to opportunities, dialogue and engagement, as well as poverty eradication and reduction of inequality, both at national and sub-national levels.

## 2. Key messages

19. The Africa Regional Forum for Sustainable Development presents the following key messages for inclusive transformation towards sustainable development in Africa:

(a) **Accelerated investment in infrastructure, transport, irrigation, energy, science and technology, and information and communications technology, as well as extending the local value-adding, manufacturing and service sectors of Africa's economies through sustainable and industrial development, are essential for creating decent jobs and supporting social enterprises, which are fundamental for eradicating poverty and building inclusive societies.** In particular, there is a need to create decent jobs by diversifying away from and adding value to primary commodities, promoting exports, building the capabilities of domestic firms and fostering industrial clusters to compete in regional and global markets for manufactured goods.

(b) **Given that sustainable development is about catering to the present without compromising future needs, Africa's natural resources should be exploited in environmentally friendly and sustainable manner**, based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and the need for international assistance for African countries to help put them on sustainable pathways.

(c) **Higher levels of social investment and mobilization of resources at the global, regional and national levels are needed to improve skills and capacity-building through the provision of education, apprenticeships, training, adequate infrastructure, health care, and food and nutrition security.** This is especially urgent in the case of young people and women, many of whom work in the informal sector doing low-skilled jobs. Harnessing the demographic dividend requires a focus on high-quality education, skills development and healthcare, particularly for women and young people, to enhance their capacity to access decent jobs generated through structural transformation.

(d) **The High-level Political Forum must mobilize the necessary resources and assistance to support member States in addressing inequality and implement, where appropriate, redistributive policies that reduce disparities in wealth, income and access to public services.** Such policies should also include modernization of agriculture, food security, building community resilience, emergency preparedness and rural development. A key policy priority in this respect is social protection. By providing universal access to high-quality basic services,

social protection can enhance productivity and boost the incomes of vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, persons with disabilities and pregnant women, thereby reducing inequalities and eradicating stigma, and ultimately contributing to sustained economic growth.

(e) **The High-level Political Forum should help member States to put in place urgent and strategic measures to support the development of sustainable cities and to transform Africa's urban areas into drivers of inclusive growth and prosperity in safe and secure environments.** If well planned, urbanization offers considerable opportunities to enhance productivity, generate wealth, reduce crime and improve living standards. This requires a cross-sectoral approach to urbanization policy in the context of national development planning.

(f) **The High-level Political Forum should help member States to put in place adequate public policies and legislative and financing measures, and promote good governance and accountability, with a view to ensuring inclusive growth and transformation.** Inclusive outcomes will not be achieved as by-products of economic growth, but require targeted action backed by resources, while being positioned as intrinsic to overall development planning at the national and regional levels. It is critical to align and direct public expenditure towards targets for social and economic inclusion. For instance, promoting gender equality and women's empowerment requires specific policies and legislation backed by financing mechanisms. This must be supported by official development assistance and other official financial flows from donors, especially in countries that find it difficult to raise domestic resources or attract private investment, and countries experiencing protracted humanitarian crises, in order to support country-driven investment needs and regional priorities.

## C. Integrated results framework and integrated implementation, including means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063

### 1. Background

20. In order to realize the aspirations, goals and targets of both agendas, countries have to own, domesticate and adopt effective national plans and implementation arrangements. While convergence between the two agendas is significant, integrated and coherent implementation of both agendas into national planning systems will be a major operational challenge.

21. Successful integrated implementation of both agendas must consider different national realities, capacities, levels of development and priorities. In addition, the need for inclusion, broad multi-stakeholder engagement, adequate financing, innovation, other means of implementation and modalities must be taken into account.

## 2. Key messages

22. The following are the key messages aimed at promoting inclusive and integrated implementation and mobilization of means of implementation for Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda.

(a) **In order to ensure an inclusive and participatory process, multi-stakeholder bodies and platforms at the national and subnational levels are necessary to enable African countries to effectively align and integrate the two agendas into national and subnational strategic frameworks.** Such bodies, which should comprise gender-responsive representation of Governments, private sector agencies, major groups and other stakeholders, will enable countries to effectively consult and take into account inputs from various interest groups. Moreover, such bodies would enhance multi-actor and multi-sectoral involvement and coordination in the implementation of the agendas within the framework of national development priorities.

(b) **Africa will need to mobilize unprecedented volumes of domestic resources to implement the two agendas; strengthening the capacities of African countries to mobilize such resources will be key, therefore, and should be fast-tracked and supported.** The focus should include fiscal resource mobilization; harnessing natural capital; the leveraging of the pool of African institutional savings; enhanced retail savings mobilization through financial inclusion; the curbing of illicit financial flows; and the reduction of inefficiency and governance or corruption-based financial leakages and wastages.

(c) **The High-level Political Forum should commit member States to implementing the Paris Agreement, in line with the principles and provisions of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, ensuring parity in the content and legal status of mitigation, adaptation and means of implementation (finance, technology transfer and capacity-building).** Climate change poses a serious risk to achieving the goals of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda. Urgent action is needed, therefore, to ensure that new and additional financial resources are mobilized under the commitments made in the Paris Agreement.

(d) **Coherent, strong, inclusive and coordinated bilateral and multilateral support, including international development cooperation, for the implementation, follow-up and monitoring of the two agendas at the various levels is needed.** United Nations agencies, regional and bilateral organizations and other partners, working in close consultation with the target beneficiaries, should align their programming with the requirements of the two agendas. The required support should be delivered in a coherent manner and through coordinated mechanisms. In the case of the United Nations, for instance, the collective actions and strategies of both the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa and the United Nations Country Teams are critical in augmenting the efforts of Governments to implement national development policies and plans, in line with the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks.

(e) **Partnerships are crucial to the mobilization and provision of the resources, capacity and technology required for the implementation of both agendas.** The recommendations contained in the African Union Commission's study on the partnership arrangements of the African Union, which included the

articulation of a strategic policy with respect to each of the strategic partners, should be supported and fully implemented.

(f) **In order to ensure that science, technology and innovation drive transformation, economic growth and sustainable development, African Governments will need to increase investment in the development of domestic technological capabilities, receive support through the transfer of technology on mutually agreed terms, and support industrialization initiatives, including green initiatives.** This will entail increased spending (including by the private sector) on research and development to at least 1 per cent of gross domestic product, with a view to improving the performance of national innovation systems and productivity competitiveness in the global market. A large portion of these resources should be devoted to environmentally friendly technologies.

(g) **Commitment by stakeholders to implement fast-track initiatives contained in the first 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063 will generate wins that will form a strong foundation and propel the implementation of both agendas.** Achieving early results from these initiatives will strengthen the commitment of all stakeholders to the agendas. It is vital, therefore, to mobilize and provide resources for the early implementation of fast-track interventions.

## D. Integrated follow-up and review of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda

### 1. Background

23. The 2030 Agenda provides for follow-up and review at the global, regional and national levels, while Agenda 2063 does so at the regional, subregional and national levels. The shared end goal of the follow-up and review process is to ensure that countries stay on track and achieve the targets in a timely fashion. The follow-up and review processes of both agendas include accountability to citizens. To enhance effectiveness, linkages between the follow-up and review processes at the various levels, based on the principle of subsidiarity, could be explored.

24. At the global level, the High-level Political Forum will play a central role in overseeing a network of follow-up and review processes, working with the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other relevant organs and forums, in accordance with existing mandates. The follow-up and review process of the 2016 session of the Forum will promote the leveraging of financing and other means of implementation for the integrated implementation of the two agendas in Africa. The follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda will converge at the High-level Political Forum, while acknowledging the role of the annual Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up, which makes the High-level Political Forum a strategic platform for mobilization of the means of integrated implementation of the two agendas.

25. Africa needs to pursue a unified track to follow-up and review the implementation of the two agendas to avoid dual reporting obligations for member States and partners. A common regional-level set of indicators based on the integrated results framework will be indispensable to foster integrated follow-up and review at the regional level.

26. The regional economic communities will play an important role in supporting efforts towards implementation, follow-up and review of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda.

27. Both agendas recognize the centrality of national-level follow-up and review. Integrated follow-up and review of the two agendas at the national level will need to be properly nurtured by strengthening the relevant national processes and systems. The essential systems include those to ensure national ownership and inclusion in follow-up and review, as well as effective national monitoring and evaluation frameworks and statistical systems.

## 2. Key messages

28. The Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development presents the following key messages to enhance integrated follow-up and review of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda:

(a) **Global-level commitment and support is needed for the integrated implementation and follow-up of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda in Africa.** The review process during the High-level Political Forum should recognize the significant synergies and relationships between the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, and their importance in achieving sustainable development in Africa. It is for this reason that the two agendas are being implemented and followed up at the regional, subregional and national levels through integrated approaches. The High-level Political Forum should therefore promote processes and propose policy actions and recommendations, including on the provision of means of implementation, that pay attention to both agendas.

(b) **The follow-up and review process at the 2016 session of the High-level Political Forum is important to support Africa to leverage financing and other means of implementation for inclusive and integrated implementation of the two agendas.** The follow-up of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, led by the annual Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up, will converge with that of the 2030 Agenda during the session of the High-level Political Forum. The Forum is therefore a strategic platform for Africa to engage in and leverage finance and other means of implementation for the integrated implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda in Africa.

(c) **A unified follow-up platform at the regional level is essential to realizing the integrated follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.** Coordinated follow-up and review at the regional level will be the basis for Africa to interact with the High-level Political Forum and other relevant global-level follow-up processes with a unified and strong voice, with a view to enhancing integrated implementation and follow-up of the two agendas.

(d) **Concrete and reliable policies and actions at all levels to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and realize the aspirations of Agenda 2063 will be undergirded by national-level follow-up and review. Accordingly, integrated follow-up and review of the two agendas at the national level will require nurturing.** The African Union Commission, the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank, in collaboration with other partners, will need to develop or help countries to adopt minimum sets of tools, including national-level integrated action plans and monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

(e) **Inclusive regional, subregional, national and subnational follow-up mechanisms that are voluntary and country-led are needed.** Both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 emphasize inclusive follow-up at all levels. Strengthened national and subnational follow-up mechanisms guided by the abovementioned principles are therefore needed to foster effective inclusive review at all levels.

(f) **High-quality, disaggregated and timely data will be required to ensure evidence- and results-based inclusive regional and national follow-up and review.** Countries need to be supported to strengthen their national statistical systems and make them responsive to the data requirements for integrated follow-up and review of the two agendas. Such systems, which are driven by technology and adequate resources, are critical to ensure data readiness and underpin the measurement of progress, monitoring and evaluation, reporting and overall follow-up processes.

(g) **A global partnership for sustainable development data must be established though an intergovernmental process, as captured in the Secretary-General's report on the post-2015 development agenda, entitled "The road to dignity by 2030", and echoed in a decision adopted at the twenty-sixth ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union.**

(h) **Africa's partners should provide capacity, appropriate technology and technical and financial support to member states, the major groups and other stakeholders to complement progress made and bridge possible risks to the effective and efficient integration of the two agendas.**

## E. Demographic dividend road map for 2017

### 1. Background

29. The demographic dividend has been recognized at various levels within the African political landscape as an important issue that lies at the heart of the continent's developmental agenda. The strong emphasis on the demographic dividend in the common African position on the post-2015 development agenda and the outcomes of key ministerial meetings, high-level events with African Heads of State and Government and other key processes led to the decision of the African Union to make the theme of the year 2017, "Harnessing the demographic dividend through investments in youth". This sends a clear message on the importance placed on the demographic dividend in Africa.

30. As Africa embarks on the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda, it is clear that the changing population structure will have far-reaching implications on the extent to which the aspirations and goals set forth in these agendas will be met. According to *World Population Prospects*, more than half of the world's population increase between 2016 and 2050 will occur in just nine countries of the world, including Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda. This shows the urgency that must guide Africa's investments in its young population today in order to position the continent towards harnessing the demographic dividend and meeting its development objectives.

31. To harness the demographic dividend, we need to build on existing platforms and ensure that reviews of the implementation of all regional outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits, including the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development in Africa beyond 2014, are synchronized with the sessions of the High-level Political Forum, to enable such reviews to contribute to the assessment of the integrated regional implementation, follow-up and review of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda.

32. Efforts to harness the demographic dividend would enable Africa to address effectively the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development. It is for this reason that African Heads of State and Government have called upon the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank, the NEPAD programme and the United Nations Population Fund to work with the African Union Commission in developing a road map with key deliverables and milestones that will guide countries and regional economic communities and help them to harness the demographic dividend.

## 2. Key messages

33. The following key messages are aimed at supporting Africa's efforts to harness the demographic dividend, as it is time to move from narrative to action in order to ensure that no one is left behind.

(a) **The strategic importance of the demographic dividend for Africa should be recognized and support mobilized for harnessing it in the implementation of Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030.** Given the demographic composition and projections for Africa, it is evident that making the right investments will strategically position the continent towards achieving Agenda 2063 and meeting the goals of Agenda 2030, which is central to creating a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development.

(b) **Support needs to be mobilized for efforts to harness Africa's demographic dividend at the global level, to ensure adequate resources and that robust implementation is supported by development partners.** The increasing interconnectivity between continents, and the firm understanding that the 2030 Agenda will only be considered as successful if the Sustainable Development Goals are met by all, calls for a strengthened global partnership between Africa and key development partners. Multilateral platforms such as the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions, the G20, the G7 and the so-called BRICS countries (Brazil, the Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa) need to work together to raise the profile and prioritize investments in youth and the enactment of policies that would help to harness the demographic dividend. This would help to address common challenges regarding migration and climate change.

(c) **Investment should be made in supporting evidence-based planning and decision-making at the country level.** There is a need to build the capacity of key institutions responsible for development planning at the national level, as well as mechanisms to strengthen the integration of the three pillars of sustainable development into development plans. Helping countries to better understand the relevance of population dynamics for sustainable development, including by conducting assessments that give a clear indication of the policy and programme interventions needed to spur high-impact and innovative solutions, remains critical. Using the evidence generated to develop targeted policies that address issues of

access to high-quality education, vocational training and skills development that is linked to the needs of the economy is crucial to harnessing the demographic dividend.

(d) **Improving access to sexual and reproductive health-care services across Africa and reducing mortality and fertility is key to achieving the demographic dividend.** Investing in increasing the access of women and girls to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including family planning, as well as investment in girls' education and empowerment, remain critical to reducing the fertility rate. Empowering girls has an important catalytic effect, as it contributes to reducing the incidence of early pregnancy, child marriage and female genital mutilation. As some African countries have already noted, including Côte d'Ivoire, there is a strong need to embark on a contraceptive revolution in Africa, as it remains central to all sustainable development efforts.

(e) **Young people should be involved in political decision-making through effective and responsible participation in political processes.**

(f) **There is a need to identify and monitor indicators linked to the demographic dividend, from both existing and emerging indicator frameworks such as the integrated results framework of Agenda 2063, the global Sustainable Development Goals indicator framework and other relevant thematic frameworks such as the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development beyond 2014.** These are crucial to measure the impact of policies and strategies aimed at harnessing the demographic dividend and monitoring progress over time.

(g) **The potential of urban migration to harness the demographic dividend should be leveraged by taking advantage of the economies of scale found in cities and urban centres, and the developmental impact of safe and orderly migration should be harnessed.** Internal and international migration represents considerable developmental potential in terms of filling skills gaps, easing labour market surplus and providing remittances.

## F. Strengthening the form and work of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

34. The following key messages are aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the Forum:

(a) **It is crucial that the outcomes of the Forum take into account and are informed by review processes on the implementation of the two agendas that are carried out by various stakeholders, including regional and subregional organizations, mechanisms and forums, United Nations entities, the major groups and other partners.** Other reviews of, or relevant to, the implementation of the two agendas need to be synchronized with the work of the Forum to ensure that such reviews contribute to Africa's assessment of the regional implementation of both agendas. The work of the Forum should enable effective consideration of submissions and other inputs from such review processes.

(b) **Learning and sharing best practices among countries, within the United Nations system, and with other regional and subregional forums, major groups and organizations is important in accelerating the implementation of**

**Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda; the Forum should include, therefore, mechanisms for learning and exchanging experiences.** It is important that countries volunteering for review during the sessions of the High-level Political Forum are assisted to participate in the Africa Regional Forum, so that they can share their experiences and lessons learned. Case studies should be conducted to support learning and exchange. African countries should be supported and encouraged to participate and contribute in the various learning and sharing forums.

(c) **Effective linkages must be established between the follow-up and review processes at the subregional level with those at the national level, with the global review preferably drawing on the regional level.** The observance of the principle of subsidiarity is clearly provided for in the architecture for monitoring and evaluation of the first 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063. Accordingly, there are clear roles on reporting and feedback to and from the various levels, that is from national to subregional to continental.

## III. Submission and presentation of the key messages

35. The second session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development requests the Economic Commission for Africa to submit the present key messages to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs as Africa's collective input to the 2016 session of the High-level Political Forum. The Africa Regional Forum further requests its Chair to transmit the key messages to the President of the Economic and Social Council and to present them during the 2016 session of the High-level Political Forum.